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11 September 1980

East Europe Report

ECONOMIC AND INDUSTRIAL AFFAIRS

(FOUO 7/80)

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CONTENTS

CZECHOSLOVAKIA

QUALITY, EFFICIENCY IN SSR AGRICULTURAL-FOOD COMPLEX URGED

Bratislava EKONOMIKA POLNOHOSPODARSTVA in Slovak, Jul 80 No 7, pp 289-291

[Article by Engineer Jan Gregor, vice president of the SSR government]

[Text] The raising of the effectiveness and quality of all work is the general line of the CPCZ, the realization of which will continue to be the basic and inevitable foundation of the further development of our economy, the creation of material resources, and the assurance of the living standard of the populace. This is so because the further development of production is faced with growth factor limitations, among which, for example, are the size of the work force and the quantity of raw materials, fuels, and energy, as well as building site land. Such development can be attained only through increased labor productivity, better utilization of basic production resources, better evaluation and more economical use of raw materials, fuels, and energy, goal-orientated changes in production structure, acceleration of production innovations, and an increase in production quality. High quality and effectiveness means savings in labor, materiel, raw materials and energy, which create latitude for the further growth of productive capacities and for better satisfaction of the needs of society. The development of our economy set off in this direction during the past years of the Sixth Five-Year Plan even though we were not able to utilize all reserves for intensification and effectiveness of development all the time and everywhere.

This fundamental line is also fully applicable to agriculture and the food industry. The importance of increasing quality and effectiveness in the entire agricultural-food processing complex is underlined by two basic facts. The first is that agriculture, after industry, is the second most important branch of the national economy for the formation of the national income of the country, and the second is that it fulfills an irreplaceable role in supplying one of the most important needs of society--the alimentation of the populace. The demands for quality and effectiveness were given unusual emphasis by the resolutions of the 15th CPCZ Congress, and the congress of the PCS, and the instructions for the realization of the long-term goals of the economic policy of the party in the agricultural-food processing complex were provided by the 13th session of the CPCZ Central Committee and the March session of the CPS Central Committee.

In its more than 30-year history, the superiority of socialist large-scale agriculture has been demonstrated. The volume of agricultural production was doubled, per hectare grain yields rose substantially, as did the intensity of livestock production, and labor productivity increased several times over. Per capita consumption of basic foods reached a high level, and dependence on imports of food was decreased. Through the effective aid of the socialist state, a modern material base was built with a constant increase in intensification of investments (seeds, industrial fertilizers, etc) and agricultural production has stabilized at a basically higher level.

After the successfully fulfilled tasks of the Fifth Five-Year Plan in 1971-1975, when gross agricultural production increased 13.5 percent, with a 15.1 percent increase in the Slovak Socialist Republic, agriculture embarked on the realization of the tasks of the Sixth Five-Year Plan following relatively more difficult conditions that could not have been anticipated during the drafting of the plan. The unfavorable climatic conditions every year, of different intensity and different conditions in individual republics, affected agriculture and influenced the volume of agricultural production, especially plant cultivation, and the production of livestock depends upon the output of grain. According to the evaluations at the 14th session of the CPCZ Central Committee and at the December session of the CPS Central Committee, the first 4 years of the Sixth Five-Year Plan did not see fulfillment of expectations in agriculture, and their results do not reflect the efforts that were exerted. As the result of 2 years of unfavorable climatic conditions, gross agricultural production annual average was only 7.6 percent higher than the level achieved during the Fifth Five-Year Plan, with an increase of 8.8 percent in the SSR. This means, that after 4 years, we are only half way to the goal that had been established by the 15th CPCZ Congress "to gradually achieve self-sufficiency in the production of grains and to further increase our overall self-sufficiency in the production of food." We had to solve the balance between sources and consumption of feed grains in recent years through extraordinary imports of grain, especially from capitalist states.

At times, the basic long-range conceptual plans are not fulfilled. The effectiveness of the measures for providing for the protein program, the development of the production and use of fruit and vegetables, as well as of other measures is low. Overall positive results were achieved in the development of viticulture, in swine raising, and in cattle and poultry raising, especially in raising broilers.

The fluctuation of agricultural production also occurred to a certain measure in the food industry. And when one speaks of the equilibrium of the food market, there still exist ample problems in the structure, variety, and timely supply to the market. The gross production of the food industry during the first 4 years of the Sixth Five-Year Plan grew overall by 12.3 percent, and in the SSR, by 15.2 percent, and lags 2.2 points behind the five-year plan tasks. In the production of food and in the rates of development of individual production sectors of the food industry in Slovakia,

there is a reflection of their links to agricultural production. Favorable development of production was marked in the poultry industry, which is the reflection of a high level of application of scientific and technical knowledge into practice, and this was true both in initial production and in the processing industry.

The unbalanced development of agricultural production during recent years has brought about a lowering in production efficiency. The lower profit formation in the Sixth Five-Year Plan as a prerequisite for fulfilling the tasks of the 1980 plan) amounts to Kcs 2.5 billion in individual farms, Kcs 1.6 billion in the state agriculture sector, and Kcs 0.64 billion in the food industry.

The agricultural and food complex in all its sectors of activity has consideredable room and capabilities for increasing work effectiveness and quality. For example, in plant raising, which is characterized by a high share of fixed assets, and where the results of efficiency depend upon the intensity of production achieved, it is necessary to direct all efforts toward minimizing the unfavorable results of the less favorable climatic conditions on production. And if at the current time it is still impossible to fully eliminate the effect of climatic conditions, nevertheless, modern scientific and technical advances and the level of intensification reached do create the prerequisites for a substantial modification of the year-to-year fluctuation of yields of individual crops. For stabilizing the annual production attainment level and thereby, also, for increasing the overall effectiveness of plant raising, a system for creating capacity, material, and labor reserves has to be built on an industrial basis.

Low-quality work done in agriculture does not manifest itself immediately, on the same day, but at the end of the production cycle, during harvesting. Even though it is not possible to appropriate the good knowledge of the organization and control of work that has been implemented in industry, where interoperational control rejects poor-quality products, the agronomical service of agricultural enterprise should hardly permit, for example, the sowing of high-quality well-known seed of high biological properties in poorly prepared and improperly fertilized soil. Continuous control would prevent the continuation of work that was begun wrong. Experience to date clearly confirms that outlays for the elimination of mistakes in production technology are extra expenditures, and this holds true both in industry and in agriculture. They lower the effectiveness of production and do not always assure high quality of the resultant production.

An exceptionally important reserve for increasing overall effectiveness of agriculture, especially plant raising, is the lowering of production losses. There is a great loss difference between the volume of production that is harvested in the field and the volume that is finally used, and unfortunately, in recent years, the difference between the two has often increased. Losses occur particularly noticeably, especially in bulk feeds (up to 30 percent) as well as with corn (to 20 percent), sugar beet, and potatoes. It will be decisively necessary to convert every required technical

and organizational measure into a real lowering of production losses, and not to require or permit the revision or modification of the norms for losses currently in effect. Production technology and processes have to be adapted to the requirements of minimizing losses, and not, on the other hand, to increasing the allowable ratios of losses by the excuse of the implementation of "high production methods and new technology."

A potential source for increasing the effectiveness of plant production can also be increased concern for the proper application of industrial fertilizers and chemical pesticides. According to the studies of our control organs, about 10-30 percent of net food products are expended as a result of improper and careless storage, especially during the time of dormancy, and during the time when possibilities for using them are limited. And it would be possible to name a great number of additional factors, for example, expanded use of scientific and technical knowledge in raising and protecting field crops, in regenerative agrotechny, the implementation of efficient systems in transport, handling, storage, etc., which can help in increasing the effectiveness of plant raising.

In the livestock-raising branch, and within its framework--cattle raising--Slovak agriculture has the greatest reserves in increasing effectiveness. Unjustifiably great differences between krajs, okreses, and agricultural enterprises exist in productiveness and in labor productivity. Although the productiveness of cattle is influenced by the composition of the breeds of the herds, the decisive part in increasing productiveness lies in the proper feeding and in the overall level of veterinary care. For the purpose of increasing effectiveness, it will be necessary to implant an orientation in cattle feeding toward high-quality bulk feeds and to minimalize the use of grain feeds. Of course, the labor productivity level in cattle raising is affected above all by the technical and technological level of production, the provision of machinery and equipment to workers, and also, where there is an equal level of equipment, especially, by the organization of work, the skills of workers, and the overall level of the work of the management and of production workers. All facts lead to the conclusion that a solution has to be found in the subjective factors, and not only exclusively in difficult solutions that require investments and intolerable imports. Above all, through the technical modernization of existing capacities it is necessary to attain a position whereby there are a minimum 30-40 milch cows per worker, and not only in new facilities, in the so-called high-capacity dairy barns, but also in facilities for 100, 200, and 400 head, in which most milch cows are kept at the current time.

For the purpose of increased efficiency, agriculture as a whole must attain a substantial decrease in investment or funding requirements, and energy and material requirements as well, per unit of production. The idea is widespread that the further development of agriculture under our conditions is linked with the intensification of production and with the replacement of labor, and therefore, it is logical that its funding and material-energy requirements must be increased. What is concerned, here, however, is the

measure of increase of such requirements that are economically effective, and the ability of the national economy to handle them. This provides for only that type of development in which the efficiency of the intensification investments increase and in which real labor replacement effects are attained, meaning a development that is linked with an increase in productivity of social labor.

The measure to which it will be necessary in the future to increase efforts, even in the agriculture of the SSR, for optimal development of funding requirements can be determined from the indicator of so-called equipment elasticity of labor productivity (it is possible to acquire values higher and lower than 1 depending upon the nature of development), which attained a value of 0.7054 during the span of years between 1950 and 1970. If we consider this value to be the permissible measure of funding requirements, it turns out that during the Fifth Five-Year Plan (0.4489) and in the first 4 years of the Sixth Five-Year Plan (0.4104) in the agriculture of the SSR, an excessively investment-intensive development was realized. The funding provision of labor increased considerably faster than did social labor productivity, and therefore, excessive activity of production funds was reached.

One of the most important reasons for such a development, in addition to many other reasons, is the inadequate utilization of existing fixed production assets, and of these, construction funds in particular. Buildings and structures in SSR agriculture in old prices in 1979 were Kcs 348.4 billion, which was 74.8 percent of the entire volume of fixed assets. Their average age was 18.5 years, and the average period of their operation, i.e., their production utilization, was not quite 37 years. From the standpoint of intensification and labor replacement, buildings and structures are an important passive component of fixed production assets, and therefore, from a standpoint of economic effectiveness, it is necessary to minimize their proportion in the entire structure. This can be achieved mainly through the maximization of the period of use of existing buildings and structures and through increasing investments for renovation and modernization, which are connected not only with a rise in the technical and technological level, but also with labor replacement effectiveness, as well as with the increasing of their capacities. New construction of buildings will have to be tied only to the provision of accommodations for increased head of farm animals, and to the replacement of buildings and structures that in actuality have been fully obsolescent and depreciated with more firmly established technical and economic indicators, the basic criterion of which will be the reduction of specific outlays per unit of capacity.

The qualitative level of agricultural production, even when it is not supplied to the consumer in its initial form (except for certain products such as vegetables, fruit, and possibly others), plays an ever-increasing role in satisfying the daily needs of people for food. The quality of agricultural products destined for food purposes ought to have specific criteria if it is to be used properly. Procurement prices thus far have

always respected the need for price advantage of a quality product over the market price. The economic laws and the new procurement prices that were decreed last year, and have been in effect as of 1 January 1980, stress quality even more, especially for products purchased for subsequent processing in the food industry. For wheat earmarked for human consumption, the content of gluten is considered, the quality of malt barley is set according to the content of nitrogen and its germinative energy, that of milk is judged at the fat content and biological purity, sugar beet quality is judged by sugar content, slaughter animals according to the yield of meat, etc. It is true that the technical conditions have not been established everywhere and for all products for the procurement of agricultural products according to quality, but these conditions will be created gradually. There is good experience in the procurement of milk. Since the introduction of material incentives of agricultural enterprises for milk quality, the proportion of first quality milk has increased significantly.

Raising effectiveness and quality in the food industry can be achieved through better evaluation of the basic raw materials, production innovation, constant raising of the nutritional value of foods, through the improvement of technological processes, and through creating conditions for saving materials and energy. In the field of effectiveness of fixed assets, it is necessary to create conditions for the maximum use of existing capacities, an increase in shift work, and to increase labor productivity through technical modernization.

The 1980 plan for agricultural production is based on the fundamental goals established by the 15th CPCZ congress and the 13th session of the CPCZ Central Committee for assuring self-sufficiency in the production of agricultural raw materials and in the production of food products. The unusually high rate of growth of agricultural production in comparison with last year follows the renewal of the development rate of all agricultural production, the establishment of ratios between plant and livestock raising with consideration for the maximum economic efficiency of invested intensification means, and with the mobilization of internal reserves of agriculture. This year's plan puts great emphasis on the assurance of the grain program, to the effect that a component of this program is increased long-range concern for bulk feeds. A component of the evaluation of quality and effectiveness of agricultural production is everything that depends on the assurance of the material and qualitative goals of agricultural production.

We are entering a period when work is developing on preparing the guidelines for working up a draft plan for the Seventh Five-Year Plan. The top party organs and the federal and national government have outlined the basic conceptual materials in which the possibilities for the growth of our economy and the social development of all our society were quantified with consideration given to worsening foreign economic conditions. The Set of Measures for Improving the Planned Management System of the National Economy After 1980 has been enacted. The main idea of these is the creation of a favorable economic climate for the development of the national economy with the

maintenance of the principle of economic feasibility and effectiveness. The measures are directed mainly in the field of planning, management, and intensification of the khozrashchet cost accounting principles of economic development. The importance and the position of Five-year plans is emphasized and the proportionality--the balancing out--of input and output is given attention. The principle was adopted of creating cash and value reserves and increasing the importance of supplier-purchaser relations, and measures are being set up for increasing the effectiveness of planning the reproduction of basic assets, with definite orientation toward progressive modernization and investments with rapid return. The functions of middle management are being strengthened as a basic link in sectorial management. The main principles of khozrashchet, the formation of funds, and the principles and measures for evaluating services and for compensation for collectives and individuals according to work results have been established.

During the Seventh Five-Year Plan, the Set of Measures for Improving the Planned Management of the National Economy will lead every department, economic production unit, enterprise, and every member of our society to a qualitatively new level, in which effectiveness will be the main criterion of quality of work. And this does not exclude agriculture and the food industry either. It depends upon everyone, if all make the proper conclusions for themselves and for their work.

5808
CSO: 2400

CZECHOSLOVAKIA

RAILROAD MOVED TO MAKE WAY FOR COAL MINING IN WEST BOHEMIA

Prague TECHNICKY TYDENIK in Czech 8 Jul 80 p 3

[Article by Judita Egyedova: "Remarkable Railroad Construction in West Bohemia--Track Moved, Coal Is Free"]

[Text] Do you know what is the most talked about topic in the world today? Of course you do: energy, getting steadily scarcer and costlier. It has become the main concern of scientists, technologists, economists and politicians. Our needs are outpacing the building of additional energy producing plants. In an effort to utilize new sources of energy--coal, for example--people completely change the face of the countryside, move a whole town, a dam or cultural monuments. Most can serve as an example: its residents left their old homes to move to the opposite hillside and their move was then followed also by the move of a rare late gothic church from the 16th century. The whole area below Krusne Hory is today unusually busy with the search for new possibilities for mining coal which is still there. It is an active site with unfinished and finished projects. One of the completed projects is the relocation of the Chodov Sokolov railroad track opened for service a few days ago after 6 years of construction.

Some History

In this part of the Sokolov basin the protective column of the Czechoslovak State Railroads made about 154 million tons of soft coal reserves inaccessible. Relocation of the Chodov-Sokolov track was therefore considered as early as the end of the 1950's. The original idea took concrete shape in 1971 when the Federal Ministry of Fuels and Power substantiated its economic effectiveness and the construction was included in the state plan. The State Institute for Transport Design and Planning in Prague became the general planner, and Eng Frantisek Krmela and Eng Alfred Kasner became the chief engineers for the project. Before they decided on the present course of the relocation, they had evaluated several possible paths on the basis of a thorough geological study.

The territory is in the basin of the Ohre, which flows through a deep canyon-type valley. The terrain has a complex geological structure, rather

inappropriate for construction work, with a presence of groundwater. At the very beginning the probes established considerable reactivity of this water in contact with Portland and Strusko (?) portland cement. After assessing the conditions in the given area and taking into consideration the configuration of the terrain and adjacent built-up areas, the planners made their final decision. Relocation of the track would start at the Chodov railroad station; before the Karlovy Vary railhead it would veer away from the original track bypassing Chodov in an arc to the southwest, and then run east of the communities of Chranisov and Nove Sedlo. In this section it would follow the Chodov-Loket track. After the Nove Sedlo station it would veer to the west, cross the Prague-Cheb highway, pass to the steep left bank of the Ohre River and continue past Kralovske Porici, where it would join the original track.

The investor for this relocation, which was started at the beginning of 1974, is the administration of railroad construction in the north Bohemian area. Construction contractors are the companies: Railroad Construction Praha, Plant 01 Plzen; the Engineering and Industrial Constructions Praha, Plant 02 Karlovy Vary, and Automation of Railroad Transportation, Praha.

Interesting Technical Features

The suggested speed for the relocated track is up to 100 km per hour, minimum circumferential radius used 550 meters, maximum grade 7 per 1,000, total length of the new rails 48.1 km.

The length of the relocated highways and waterways was 19.5 km, and the volume of excavations was 4 million cubic meters. In order to eliminate road-level crossings the designer proposed construction of 19 bridges, mostly of reinforced concrete. Eight of these are railroad and 11 are highway bridges. High fills and deep cuts alternate along the relocated track. The largest fill is at the Nove Sedlo station (15 meters) and in Kralovske Porici at the end of the relocated track (as much as 21 m above the ground). Floods are frequent in the Ohre River basin, and stone facing to a height of 50 cm above the water level was proposed to protect the bases of the banks. The deepest cut is to a depth of 30 m and is located in the Stare Sedlo sandstone strata. The slopes are reinforced by anchored safety nets made of silon. This solution allows for water runoff from possible cracks without any other adjustments. Support walls are made of prefabricated units, the highest being 10 m above the level of the railroad ties.

Critical Components

The largest and most critical component of the new line was the roadbed. About 3.2 million cubic meters had to be excavated, which illustrates how extensive the groundwork was. The track was build with SB 6 concrete ties, except for the locations where the line passes through the previously mined area and where wooden ties were laid.

Of the 19 bridges the 2 largest are in Kralovske Porici, 500 meters apart. Their support structures are of reinforced concrete and they are interconnected. Certain progressive methods were used in their construction for the first time in our country. The designer suggested circular struts as connecting elements between the steel girders and the concrete slab. The construction process made it possible to keep the weight of the structures at a minimum. Completely mounted and interconnected structures weighing about 170 tons were placed on the supports up to the height of 21 meters with a single Demag 1200 crane having a capacity of 250 tons.

Among the most interesting components of the relocated line is a prefabricated 210.5 m-long railroad tunnel. It is a unique structure such as has never been built before on such a scale in our country. The tunnel dome proper, located in an open cut, consists of rectangular prefabricated sections connected with monolithic base girders or supporting walls. Each of two independent parts of the structure has a different arch depending on the stress and geological conditions. It was very difficult to determine quantitatively the resistance of the earth placed on the arch by the tamped backfill. The theoretical statistical solution of the dome proper was prepared by the team of the Chair for Concrete and Bridge Constructions, Faculty of Engineering, Slovak Advanced Technical School in Bratislava, under the direction of Docent Eng Zvara. This tunnel eliminated the need for three road overpasses.

The construction project required reconstruction of the Chodov railroad station, laying of new spurs to Sklo Union plants in Chodov and Nove Sedlo, adjustment of the direction and height of the Chodov-Loket track, construction of the new so-called Vintirov junction and connection of a spur to the large quarry Jiri; and construction of the railroad station in Nove Sedlo. Its staging building has been designed as a mounted three-story skeleton. Access to the roof-covered platform is through an underpass from the hall. A new bus station and a parking lot are located in front of the railroad station.

The whole track is equipped with automatic safety systems; Chodov and Nove Sedlo stations have the most modern relay equipment. With the aid of computerized selection the dispatcher sets up the train route on the panel in 30 seconds. Switches with movable frogs are placed along the whole track. The construction required considerable incursions into engineering networks and water systems of the region, and even required reconstruction of the road network.

Construction of Exemplary Quality

The importance of the new relocated line is extraordinary. It will allow full development of coal mining in the eastern area of the Sokolov tract. It will also accelerate and improve railroad traffic, and increase the safety and comfort of passenger travel. Visible urban improvement of adjacent areas is also taking place.

Test trials rated the relocated line as construction of exemplary quality. Of course the best test of its true quality will only come under full use. Even today, however, we may state that all those who took part in its construction truly excelled. In its scope and total cost the construction of the relocated line represents the biggest construction investment of the west Bohemian region in the Sixth Five-Year Plan. And what is extremely important: at the same time the new graph system and this new line were put in service this year. And that is exactly according to the plan at the specified time. With such vast construction this is almost atypical.

9562
CSO: 2400

FRENCH JOURNALIST COMMENTS ON MEAT SITUATION IN POLAND

Paris L'EXPRESS in French 12-18 Jul 80 p 55

[Article by Emile Guikovaty: "Poland: Follow the Beef"]

[Text] The meat shortage is a subject for inexhaustible joking in Gierek's Poland. When it doesn't result in strikes and cause bloodshed.

The good old Polish joke is well known. A brave workman enters a butcher shop-delicatessen in Katowice and asks for a scallop. Chief employee of the government-owned store: "There aren't any." The man insists: "A side of pork?" "No." "A piece of ham?" "None left." After even more absurd questions back and forth: "Pate? Head cheese? Sausage? Boar's head?" The employee, aghast, says "No, no, no," and when the unhappy customer finally gives up heads for the door, he hurls at him admiringly, "What a memory you have, Comrade!"

The meat shortage is a subject for inexhaustible joking in the Poland of Edward Gierek. Not always joking. It is largely in protest against this phenomenon, so difficult to explain in a solid producing country, that the Baltic workers rose up in 1970, and were imitated by the workers of the Warsaw suburbs in 1976. That was not a joking matter; blood flowed.

Blood did not flow last week, but the regime once more found itself confronted by a working class that, not content with being "in power," as explained by the hierarchy (and Charles Fiterman, Georges Marchais' deputy in the PCF), insisted on being treated with a minimum of decency.

The pretext for the new revolt is a singular one. In recent years the Polish government took it into its head to open, in addition to the 6,000 state stores, 1,500 so-called "commercial" butcher shops, in which meat would be sold at prices more or less close to black market prices. It was hoped that in this way merchandise sold clandestinely by the peasants would be attracted to normal channels. The main objective still being to put an end to state subsidies.

The initiative failed to dispel a mystery. On the one hand the government was affirming that the price support policy was costing it in the neighborhood of 15,000,000,000 francs, whereas the consumer was finding, after standing in line for several hours, that he could only buy pieces of the poorest quality. And on the other hand, stores were being established for the "privileged" where, despite the effort toward "truth in pricing," meat was not much less rare. The most affluent Polish, however much they said they were ready to pay more, found there was nothing to buy. Their only recourse was to welcome each week the peasants who come to their homes with baskets of eggs, chickens and ducks.

Peace and Human Rights

Be that as it may, the Warsaw government announced in the middle of last week that it was going to double the number of "commercial" butcher shops and bring it to 3,000 in all. To the Polish workers this decision made no sense; meat was going to disappear completely from the subsidized butcher shops and would only be available at a higher tariff. Work stopped immediately in the Warsaw steel mills, in the large agricultural machinery plant at Ursus, in the outskirts of the capital and in several factories in Tczew, Mielec and Gdansk. The movement would undoubtedly have spread had not the government, to soothe spirits, granted wage increases of around 5 to 10 percent.

The austerity policy that the Edward Babiuch team means to conduct behind First Secretary Gierek, was again challenged. Just as it is coming up against the resistance of a certain fringe of the party apparatus at the same time.

That was the moment chosen by the American billionaire Armand Hammer, who built a fortune on trade with the Soviet Union, to organize in Warsaw an international conference on "peace and human rights." That Western personages had agreed to participate in such a masquerade stupefied the Polish intellectuals, who are not much accustomed to considering their country a model of the defense of freedom. One understands their astonishment.

The very day following the day on which the strange conference had adopted a text that it thought was positive, the Polish newspapers published it, simply omitting the two passages that claimed to link the progress of detente with the progress that might be achieved in the area of human rights. A delegate from France, the jurist Edgar Faure, former chairman of the Council and former president of the National Assembly, nevertheless gave the gold "Hammerian" human rights medal to Edward Gierek.

Shame is no longer a part of this world.

PHOTO CAPTION

1. P. 55 The line in a Warsaw butcher shop.

8946
CSO: 3100

POLAND

FRENCH PRESS NOTES LABOR MOVEMENT CRISIS

Paris L'EXPRESS in French 26 Jul 80 pp 50-51

[Article by Emile Guikovaty]

[Text] The crisis brought about by the government's increase in the price of beef is expanding, and a real movement for demands seems, today, to be able to defy Gierek.

One must guard against drawing hasty conclusions about the strike movements which have hit dozens of Polish enterprises throughout the month of July. It truly seems, however, that these movements have gone beyond the stage of a simple protest against higher meat prices. For the first time in any country controlled by the Communists and sitting under the constant threat of Soviet arms, the government has been obliged to negotiate directly with authentic representatives of the workers, without calling on its pseudo-trade unions or on the use of force by its militias. Two weeks ago, it was possible to believe that the work stoppages that occurred in several factories, from Warsaw to Gdansk, would be without consequence.

The government bestirred itself to explain that the price of meat would only be increased in the so-called "commercial" stores, a legalized form of the parallel market. In eating-places on the premises of enterprises, and in the regular stores, prices would not change. The workers nonetheless persisted in demanding wage increases and ended up by getting them.

This was a blow to the prestige of the head of the United Workers Party (Polish Communist Party), Edward Gierek, who, as late as 9 July, was saying that wages would only be raised as productivity increased.

The worst was yet to come. Not only the work stoppages encouraged by the wavering of the government, but they would reach a culmination on 16, 17, and 18 July, in the transport strike at Lublin, the large city (300,000 inhabitants) in eastern Poland, 75 km from the Soviet border. Trains, buses and trolleys were paralyzed to the point of calling forth an emergency meeting of the Politburo of the party.

On the evening of 18 July, this all-powerful entity was obliged to humble itself to the point of making a solemn appeal for the resumption of work and of suggesting that the situation was "of such a nature as to awaken concern among Poland's friends," which was one way of evoking the danger of Soviet intervention.

For Recognition of the Right To Strike

The Lublin strike was launched by locomotive engineers, soon followed by all the railway workers. Several trains were abandoned on the tracks, blocking the convoys that connect Poland with the Soviet Union. Food stores had to be provisioned by the Army, since another strike movement had stopped production in the municipal bakeries and dairies.

The most interesting aspect of the movement, however, was the formation of a railway workers' strike committee, which was permitted to negotiate with the administration. The action was supported by a goodly part of the population.

Mobs formed spontaneously in various parts of the city to prevent nonstrikers from operating the buses and trolleys. Railway workers from the city of Siedlce, 100 km from Lublin, who had been called up to keep the depots and the Lublin station running, turned back, in order not to oppose the other eastern countries, a perfectly orderly movement, of the kind we see in countries which respect the freedom of unions. The railway workers of Lublin were demanding, moreover, not only a wage increase of 1,300 zlotys--15 to 20 percent of present wages--but also recognition of the right to strike.

Another "first" for the Lublin railway workers: their movement had such repercussions throughout the country that on Saturday 19 July the Warsaw press had to report it with quite unusual candor. The appeal by the Politburo of the party (United Workers Party), however, was published only in the Lublin daily, SZTANDAR LUDU.

Work resumed little by little in Lublin, while negotiations continued between the administration and the transport workers. But few observers think that this "hot summer" of the Polish workers will leave no imprint, or that it will be forgotten quickly. One could say, without exaggeration, that at least a new workers' movement has been born, and that it will try to find its own path in a society which is having more and more difficulty imposing its monolithic ideology and politics.

9516
CSO: 3100

END